

**Foster Parent Retention**  
**Amy Stanley**  
**Kent School of Social Work**  
**University of Louisville**

**Quantitative Study**

The research question for the quantitative study was “What factors lead to a foster parent’s continued willingness to provide care?” This research design was a summative explanatory program evaluation. The sample was a non-probabilistic criterion sample. There were two groups of foster parents – active and inactive who were all approved by the Cabinet for Families and Children. Twenty files in each group were evaluated from the Green River Region by using a chart file review form. The researcher gathered information on the number who are still in the program, the number who have discontinued care, the type of foster home, the length of care, reasons for discontinuing care, and demographics. The information was measured by placing a check on the appropriate response.

The main reasons for discontinuing care were: no reason given, loss of eligibility, loss of contact, desire to travel, age, and substantiated abuse in the foster home. From the information gathered, it does not appear that there is a problem with foster parent retention in the Green River Region.

**Qualitative Study**

The research question for the qualitative study was “What are the foster parents’ experiences while providing care in the foster care program?” This research design was a formative descriptive program evaluation. The sample was a non-probabilistic availability sample. There was 1 current foster parent and 1 former foster parent interviewed. There was 1 current and 1 former foster parent who could not be interviewed after it was set up; and due to time more could not be added. The interviews were conducted face-to-face using an interview guide. The participants were also asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview.

The findings and themes were very limited in this study due to the small sample. The current foster parent reported they are supported by their spouse, family, friends, church, social worker, other foster parents, therapists, and foster parent association. The foster parent stated that they foster to provide a safe and nurturing home to the children. They stated that they feel like they have made a difference. The former foster parent had the same responses as the current one did. The reasons for discontinuing care were due to traveling and stress in their personal life or with family.

**Impact on Practice**

The impact of this study on practice is that it shows that the foster care program is a good one. There is always room for improvement. However, the Green River Region does a good job trying to maintain the foster parents that they have. The reasons found for the discontinuance of care were not negative ones against the program. Expanding the sample of this study would make it more interesting, although it could change the findings a great deal. A closer look at the recruitment of foster parents would also be helpful.

# Foster Parent Retention



A Look at the reasons

Amy Stanley

# *Purpose of the research*

---

- # Turnover among foster parents
- # Reasons need to be examined
  - Group Preparation & Selection
  - Trainings
  - Greater number of children entering foster care with multiple problems
  - Making foster care a positive experience



# *Research Questions*

---

## # Quantitative

- What factors lead to a foster parent's continued willingness to provide care?

## # Qualitative

- What are the foster parents' experiences while providing care in the foster care program?

# *Quantitative Method*

## # Design

- Summative explanatory program evaluation

## # Sampling

- 2 groups of foster parents -20 active & 20 inactive
- Criteria - approved by CFC

## # Description of variables

- Training & support
- Foster parents' willingness to provide care

## # Data collection

- Chart file review using a form



# *Qualitative Method*

## # Design

- Formative descriptive program evaluation using a narrative design

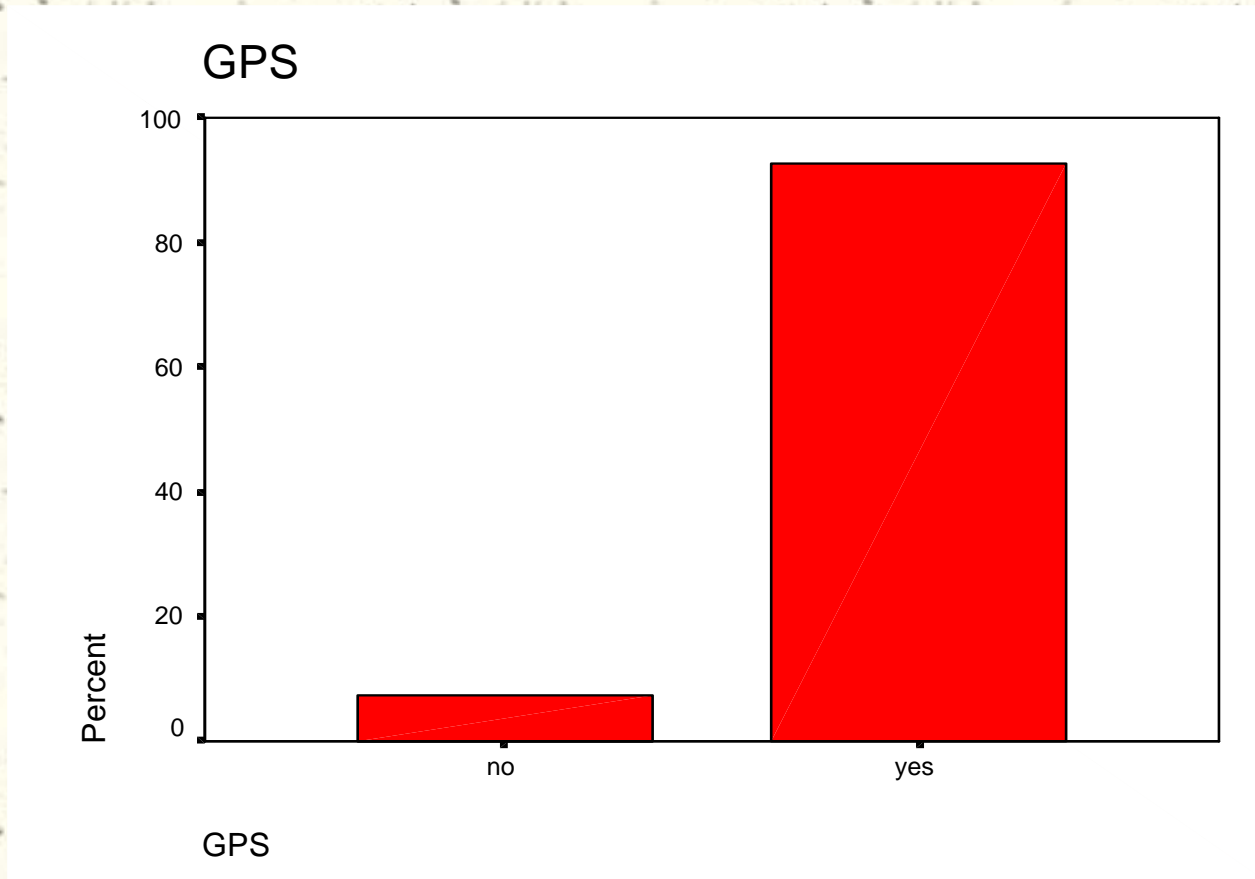
## # Sampling

- 2 groups of foster parents - 2 active (provided care for at least 5 years) & 2 inactive (discontinued care)

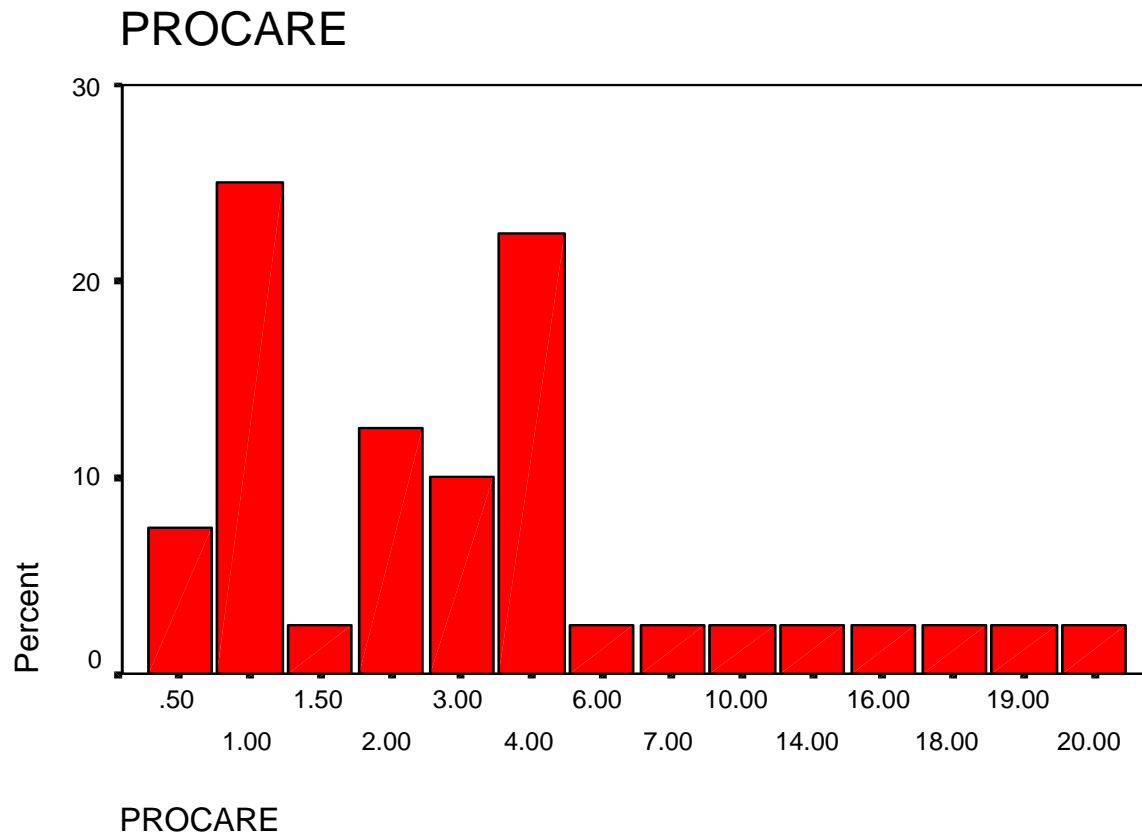
## # Data Collection

- Interview using an interview guide asking about their experiences, support, and training

# *Families who participated in GPS*

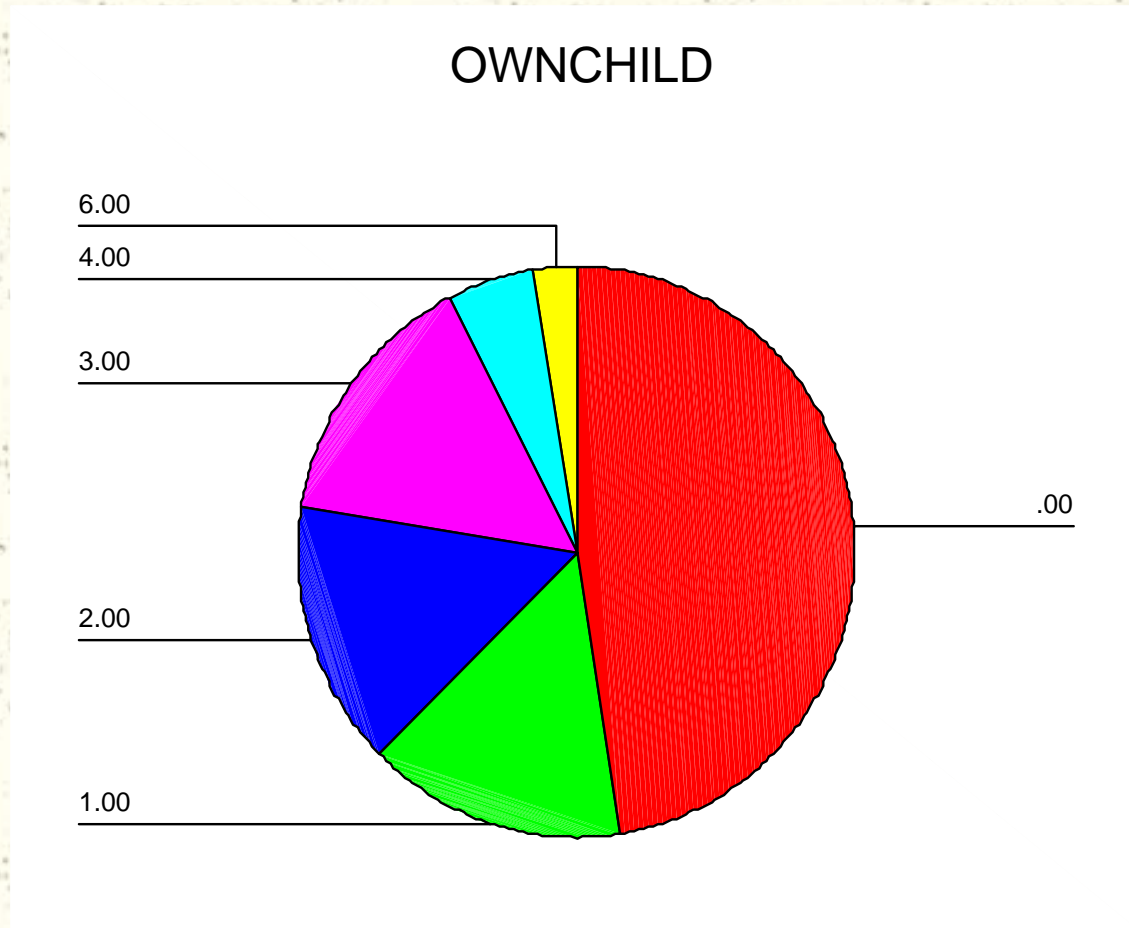


*The years that each family has/had provided*





# *The number of biological children the families have*



# *Provided Care vs. Still in Program?*

**PROCARE \* inprog Crosstabulation**

Count		inprog		Total
		no	yes	
PROCARE	.50	2	1	3
	1.00	4	6	10
	1.50		1	1
	2.00		5	5
	3.00	3	1	4
	4.00	6	3	9
	6.00	1		1
	7.00	1		1
	10.00	1		1
	14.00		1	1
	16.00		1	1
	18.00	1		1
	19.00		1	1
	20.00	1		1
Total		20	20	40

# *GPS vs. Still in program?*

## **inprog \* GPS Crosstabulation**

Count

	GPS		Total
	no	yes	
inprog no	2	18	20
yes	1	19	20
Total	3	37	40



# Qualitative Results - Themes

## # Active

- To provide a safe & nurturing home
- Supported by spouses, family, friends, church, social workers, other foster parents, therapists, teachers, foster parent association, & financial assistance
- Committed to the children
- Helping or making a difference

## # Inactive

- Wanting to travel
- Retiring
- Support system was the same as active
- Do not view the program as negative
- Feel they have made a difference in children's lives
- Too much stress in personal life or with family

## *Implications for practice*

---

- # Better documentation
- # Not much retention of foster parents in this area



## *What I might have done differently*

- # Expanded sample on quantitative and qualitative method
- # Used more time
- # Found a better way to measure the variable "support"
- # Put more thought into the study



### **Findings**

- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, the youngest was 28-years-old and the oldest was 63-years-old.
- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, 6 are 41-years-old.
- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, 29 were married.
- ❖ Almost half of the 40 foster parents do not have children of their own.
- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, the minimum monthly income was \$1000 and the maximum monthly income was \$7500.
- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, the least amount of years providing care was ½ year and the most was 20 years.
- ❖ The 5 reasons given for foster parents discontinuing care out of the 20 inactive foster parents were: age, no reason given, loss of contact, loss of eligibility, and substantiated abuse in the home.
- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, the least amount of training hours for a foster parent was 30 hours and the most was 254 hours.
- ❖ Out of the 40 current or former foster parents, 37 attended Group Preparation and Selection and 3 did not. The 3 may be the ones who have provided care the longest and didn't have GPS at the time.
- ❖ Out of 38 current and former foster parents, 16 were just approved as foster parents since June 2000.
- ❖ Out of the 29 married foster parents, 15 are current foster parents and 14 have discontinued care.
- ❖ Out of the 18 foster parents who do not have children of their own, 6 are current foster parents and 13 have discontinued care.
- ❖ Out of the 20 current foster parents, over half make \$3000 or more a month, and that does not include the foster parent per diem.